

# Nicaragua

## alumni

### Alumni Spotlight

## An Incomparable Experience

By Eimeel Castillo, UGRAD 2008 Alumna

When the chairman of the Department of History at my university called me to his office, I never guessed an incredible opportunity was going to appear in my life. He offered me the opportunity to apply for a scholarship that would allow me to study in the United States for a semester or one academic year, completely without any costs. I left his office with few intentions to apply and wondering how many chances I could possibly have to earn such a grant. But as with any other

school day, after class I went to my part-time internship at the American Corner, a bilingual public information center. It was such a surprise when my supervisor there gave me the same application form I had just received a few hours earlier. At that exact moment, I was convinced that opportunity was written in my destiny.

The next weeks and months were all about the application process and my

anxiety increased as I was going through the different stages: the TELP test and the interview with the U.S Embassy staff. The so anticipated phone call came in April, just a few days before my birthday. It was a wonderful gift and when I got the

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news, I immediately remained silent just because I did not believe what I was hearing! All the travel and academic arrangements started and suddenly I received tons of emails from the Embassy, World Learning and my host univer-

sity.

The day of my departure incredibly I was not nervous, instead I was ecstatic because it was a certainty that an exciting experience was about to begin and it all depended on me; I was in charge of everything! And that contrast of feelings, the sense of control but also the unknown, provided me with courage to be able to say goodbye to my family at the



*Continued on page 2...*

## STATE ALUMNI Register Now!

### Get Involved Locally: Searchable Alumni Association Contact List

A new feature on State Alumni highlights alumni associations around the world. Each association listed includes local contact information and can include more specific information, such as the organization's bylaws or logo. Visit the Alumni Association page to find information about alumni associations in your country. If your association is not listed or if any information is incomplete or incorrect, please contact: [webmaster@alumni.state.gov](mailto:webmaster@alumni.state.gov).

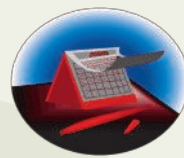
This section also contains helpful information for the management of alumni associations, such as fundraising tips, guides to setting up a mentor program, and a discussion forum (click "subscribe" to receive email updates from the forum). This Alumni Association Message Board enables subscribers to ask questions and to network with fellow alumni association leaders. Alumni may inquire about best practices, request guidance for projects and solicit support for international events



► RECENT ALUMNI NEWS.....2



► HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH .....3



► CALENDAR OF EVENTS.....4

airport and temporarily leave my life in Nicaragua. I took three flights to finally get to Rochester in a freezing winter night in early January.

The first days at Nazareth College were not quite easy. Between the cold weather, homesickness and the quick language immersion, I found myself struggling to speak English fluently since I was still studying the language when I left; everyone seemed to speak so fast! But luckily, those worries would lower down as I practiced and got used to my new everyday activities. More importantly, I created a strong bond with other international UGRAD scholars, particularly those from other Latin-Americans countries; we became like family, shared laughs, traveled together and always provided support to each other. I still keep my best and most vivid memories of this experience with Rodrigo (El Salvador), Victoria and Tamara (Uruguay).

The exchange experience in the U.S. helped to make me a better person. I am now more self-reliant, open-minded, expressive and adventurous than before. Indeed, it allowed me to grow in diverse aspects and to appreciate the diversity of the world. Studying in an international environment was an endless journey of discovery because I

could recognize my own cultural traits through the interaction with other people who had vastly different beliefs, customs or points of view than mine. Being around them and understanding their worries, listening to their opinions or just simply laughing with their stories, was the most valuable lesson; because ultimately, I realized all people no matter their skin color, accent or height, share the same essence: we are all human beings full of dignity striving for a better and happier life.

It is so curious how quickly those four months went by. It was early May when I left and I remember those last days with sadness, it was time to say goodbye again. I returned to my life at home and the transition was quite smooth, I was in class within a week. Of course, I missed all my friends and the sense of independence by living on campus but I did not have any problems or symptoms during readjustment.

Having lived this incomparable experience is a true gift that I continuously appreciate. And I can only compensate by motivating other Nicaraguan students to apply for any opportunity to study abroad. With that intention, other former scholars and I, organized a presentation about the UGRAD program at my university in October last year.



Eimeel was an Exchange Student at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY during spring semester 2009. She is now finishing her bachelor's degree in History at UNAN-Managua in Nicaragua

The community service was another enriching facet of the exchange program; it motivated me to do something to improve someone else's life. That is the reason why I have been a mentor in the English language for high school students since last October and recently participated as a presenter in a Central American Congress of History with a paper on exchange programs for history majors. Even though, I still feel I can give much more, I am now completely convinced there is a tremendously powerful potential in each of us, ready to transform our lives and societies.

## What's going on... Recent Alumni News

### \* **UGRAD 2009 have countless experiences to share! (July 2010)**

The group of 9 young Nicaraguans recently met with Ambassador Callahan to share their experiences in the different U.S. college campuses they attended. Each one of them had a life changing experience and learned so much of the U.S. Culture, society, values, education and politics. From the pumpkin-carving season, to the first-time-snow season, from the always exciting Hollywood world to the grandeur of the Mississippi river; each one had something to talk about. Please visit the website [http://spanish.nicaragua.usembassy.gov/programa\\_becas.html](http://spanish.nicaragua.usembassy.gov/programa_becas.html) to view more of their experiences.

### \* **Women of Prosperity: Jacqueline Perez (July 2010)**

Jacqueline Perez's Pathways to Prosperity alumnae and member of the Vital Voices local chapter was interviewed by Carlos Fernando Chamorro on his nightly news show *Esta Noche*. Jacqueline Perez spoke about her experience as a small business owner and entrepreneur and explained the life changes she has experience after taking part on the Pathways' program. She talked how her family shoemaking business is expanding due to the help of her Pathway's mentor and the international network is helping to expand her business outside Nicaragua.

### \* **Melania Noguera, a Humphrey alumna at work (August 2010)**

Since November 2009, Melania Noguera started two projects in her town, Chichigalpa. One is focused to improve the English level of the high school teachers of the town and rural neighboring areas. At this moment she has 10 teachers participating in her project. The other project she is developing is: "Saturdays of the Community": She organizes community activities with youth to motivate the voluntarism.



Melania and kids from the community visiting and helping out the elderly.



# Hispanic Heritage Month!

## A Celebration of Hispanic-American Heritage

By Louise Fenner



Young members of the Folklorico dance troupe wear dazzling costumes on a float in the Pinafesta parade in Roswell, New Mexico.

Washington — Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15-October 15, honors the diverse people of Spanish-speaking backgrounds in the United States — those who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America and the Caribbean.

Special programs, events, exhibits and websites celebrate

the culture, traditions and extraordinary contributions of the 48.4 million Hispanics who constitute the largest and fastest-growing minority group in the United States, according to the Census Bureau. In addition, there are about 4 million residents of Puerto Rico, a Caribbean U.S. territory.

The Hispanic population is projected to nearly triple to almost 133 million by 2050, and will jump from 16 percent to 30 percent of the U.S. population. Two-thirds of Hispanic-origin people in the United States are of Mexican background. Next in line are people of Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran and Dominican backgrounds.

### THE STORY OF AMERICA ITSELF

Today, more than ever, Hispanic Americans play an integral role in shaping the American experience. Hispanics serve on the U.S. Supreme Court and in two Cabinet posts (Labor and Interior). The influence of Hispanic culture is reflected in every aspect of American life, from politics to education, music and television. “The story of Hispanics in America is the story of America itself,” says President Obama. “The Hispanic community’s values — love of family, a deep and abiding faith, and a strong work ethic — are America’s values.”

The president says that Hispanics have served with honor and distinction in the armed services and have enriched U.S. culture in every arena, “from sports to the sciences and from the

arts to our economy.”

The Census Bureau, for example, reports that there are more than 2.3 million Hispanic-owned businesses in the United States. That number jumped 43.6 percent between 2002 and 2007. In the United States, Hispanic buying power is growing faster than that of non-Hispanics.

### HONORING HISPANIC CULTURE

The celebration of Hispanic heritage began on a national scale in 1968 with a weeklong celebration. The designated week was selected to coincide with Independence Day celebrations on September 15 in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, September 16 in Mexico and September 18 in Chile. In 1988, President Reagan approved a law expanding the celebration to a month, running from September 15 to October 15.

In addition to community events, a number of U.S. government agencies celebrate the month with special events and projects.

The U.S. Library of Congress has a Web page dedicated to Hispanic Heritage Month. The library is also sponsoring the creation of an oral history of America, and one initiative — StoryCorps Historias — focuses specifically on recording the diverse stories and life experiences of Latinos in the United States. Its Veterans History Project site features pages devoted to Hispanics in Service and Experiencing War.

The Smithsonian Institution, headquartered in Washington, has created the Smithsonian Latino Center to develop Latino-themed programs and exhibits for national and international audiences. The center is also documenting the Smithsonian’s extensive collection of Latin-American objects.

Another agency celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month is the National Park Service, which tells the story of Freedom Tower, the entry point for thousands of exiled Cubans into Miami, now a national historic landmark.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)

### ON-LINE RESOURCES

#### \* **America.gov**

⇒ Obama’s Proclamation on National Hispanic Heritage Month 2010

<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/September/20100916122333su7.189143e-02.html&distid=ucs>

⇒ Hispanics, the Largest U.S. Minority, Enrich the American Mosaic

<http://www.america.gov/st/peopleplace-english/2010/September/20090921163442xlrennef0.8085836.html&distid=ucs>

⇒ Hispanics in the U.S. Culture

<http://www.america.gov/hispanics-us.html>

⇒ Library of Congress:

<http://www.hispanicheritagemonth.gov/>

⇒ Smithsonian Institution:

[http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/heritage\\_month/hhm/index.html](http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/heritage_month/hhm/index.html)



# Photo Gallery



David Balmaceda, UIELSP Alumnus, talking to his fellow classmates about his experience.



Cynthia Cordero, UGRAD Alumna, carving pumpkins while studying at Jackson State University.



SUSI Alumni, Lucia Paiz and Iris Raudez, during their stay at Oregon State University.

## Calendar of Activities

### October 2010

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					01	02
03	04	05	06	07	08	09
			Library Conference, Oct. 7-8, 2010			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Rhythm Road: Paul Beaudry & The Pathways visiting Nicaragua, Oct. 9-13, 2010			JOIN OUR climate WEBCHATS	Can We Slow Down Climate Change?		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
			JOIN OUR climate WEBCHATS	Adapting to a Changing Climate		

### We want to hear from you!

This is **YOUR** newsletter, we welcome suggestions and questions. Write to our office to include your articles, your efforts, your photos...

Contact  
**Shany M. Perez**  
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PerezSM@state.gov  
(505) 2252-7673

**VISIT OUR  
WEBSITE**  
Exchange  
Opportunities



**Happening NOW!**

⇒ **Video from UGRAD Alumni who recently came back to Nicaragua**

Check it out!

Visit us to find out more!  
[http://spanish.nicaragua.usembassy.gov/programa\\_becas.html](http://spanish.nicaragua.usembassy.gov/programa_becas.html)

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